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KAGUMITA

*In the past we used to proudly teach
the children of the poor
how to read and write.*

*Now we must sit at the feet
of the poor and the oppressed;
they teach us revolution.*



**TEACHERS MUST
LEARN TO FIGHT**



The lesson of Vietnam

"Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom." These words of Ho Chi Minh echoed and reechoed across the world on April 30, 1975 when the Vietnamese people defeated the world's strongest military and economic power and liberated their country from its clutches.

Ten years after that signal event in world history, the opposing sides in that conflict are still at loggerheads as to what lessons may be drawn from it. For the victor and the supporters of revolution, perhaps the most important lesson to be derived from the Vietnamese triumph is that it affirmed that *the people can make history*. It shattered the myth of US military invulnerability and proved that the people of a small country can defeat the aggression of a big country, by rising up in arms and grasping in their own hands the destiny of their country.

For the vanquished and the supporters of imperialism like Ronald Reagan, the "collapse of Vietnam" was the result of a failure of will in the US executive which prevented the military from winning a victory that was well within its grasp. Other superhawks like Richard Nixon have used the debacle to whip up war fever in the US. In his new book *No More Vietnams*, Nixon explained that while the title "can mean we will not try again" it *should* mean we will not fail again.

But based on what *did* happen, it would be more enlightening to think about why and how the Vietnamese people won Vietnam, and why and how the US could have never won it.

First of all, the US lost the war because it did not – and does not to this day – understand the power of wars of national liberation. The US war effort was doomed from the start because it did not have the support and sympathy of the Vietnamese people. On the other hand, the greatest strength of the resistance forces lay in their close ties with the people who rallied around the National Liberation Front's (NLF) call to unite and defeat the US aggressors and their war of destruction.

Using the strategy of *people's war*, which combined both military combat and political action, the NLF mobilized the entire population for the struggle "until the Americans quit and the puppets topple." Every inch of Vietnamese territory – the hills, forests, plains and urban areas – became a war zone for US invaders. Trained and equipped for conventional warfare, US troops were completely unprepared for this new type of

warfare, a total war waged by the whole people.

As its immense superiority in weaponry and military expertise failed to bring about the expected suppression of the liberation forces, the US escalated the war. Its arsenal of destruction was terrifying – napalm firebombs, poisonous gases, anti-personnel bombs and toxic sprays like Agent Orange. But escalation has its own perverse logic. Far from boosting American neo-colonial strategy, the US military actions only served to destroy its foundations. US war crimes stirred greater hatred for US imperialism and blocked its schemes to prop up the Saigon puppet government, an essential element of US policy.

Other important factors contributed to the US defeat in Vietnam, which are just as universally applicable to today's national liberation movements. One was the broad international support generated for the Vietnamese struggle and the development of the anti-war mass movement in the US. Both helped create a climate of public opinion hostile to the war and sharpened US isolation. Also central to the Vietnamese victory was the strategic leadership exercised by the NLF and the Vietnam Workers' Party throughout the entire course of the revolution. It was they that developed the sound political and military strategy that focused the people's anger toward US aggression and won the very hearts and minds that American policy-makers always talked about but could never rally.

Indeed, the Vietnam War is replete with lessons, for all those that would heed these. But it is extremely unfortunate that the US has failed to heed such lessons. Today, ten years after the Vietnam debacle, another US President is preparing the way for new US military adventures in counter-revolution in other parts of the world. In the Philippines, one of America's new Vietnams, the US foreign policy consists of shoring up an unpopular dictatorship and pressing for a military solution as the main element in a strategy of escalating intervention. To this policy, the Filipino people, like their Vietnamese counterparts a decade ago, are responding with mounting resistance and struggle.

And therein lies the tragic, forgotten lesson of the Vietnam War. It is the tragedy of a mighty global power, who refusing to learn from history, is doomed to repeat it.

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Cover story: This May, more than 40 teacher-activists from all over the country gathered to convene the First National Congress of the Katipunan ng mga Guro ng Makabayan (KAGUMA), the national democratic underground organization for teachers. In this issue, LIB focuses on the KAGUMA's recent gains in leading the teachers' movement and its Eight-Point General Program.

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The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF) serves as the organizational framework and channel for the unity, cooperation and coordination of all anti-imperialist and democratic forces, including overseas Filipinos. It traces its beginnings to the establishment of the Preparatory Commission for the National Democratic Front on April 24, 1973. LIBERATION is the official publication of the NDF.



People's school: KAGUMA cadre holding adult literacy class in a guerrilla front

COVER STORY

On today's significant issues and events

Mentors for the masses

KAGUMA launches revolutionary teachers' movement on a national scale

Very early on Monday mornings, Aris bids goodbye to his family, and takes a jeepney ride from his hometown to go to work. After traveling 15 kilometers, however, Aris gets off, for the vehicle can take him only that far. He must go the rest of the way on foot.

Briskly, he turns toward a familiar path, and for one hour, follows trails that take him through thick coconut groves and hilly fields of dense cogon grass. The way is long and Aris usually finds himself singing lines from a song a friend taught him: *Uya na ining martsa/ Martsa kan taga-Bicolandia*. (This is the march/ The Bicol people's march). He smiles at the irony of the words' peculiar relevance to his present condition.

Aris is a teacher and his destination is a tiny, one-storey, semi-concrete structure. Here, in this small building located five kilometers from the nearest road, Aris is known as "Sir" to some 50 barrio school-children. He is one of Bicol's many "upland" teachers who often have to cross rivers, climb mountains, cut through dense forests and trudge along seldom-used paths to reach their schools. Aris is also one of the leading activists of the *Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan* (KAGUMA), the underground organization of teachers in

the Philippines.

He is instrumental in building up KAGUMA cells in Bicol, especially among upland teachers. For many years, the latter did their jobs without receiving any extra pay for their efforts despite the fact that they were entitled to this under the

Magna Carta for Public School Teachers. Aris was one of the first to join mass actions in the early '80s to demand higher pay and higher allowance for the upland teachers. He tirelessly dedicated his time to this task, and became an articulate spokesman for his group.

In 1984, when teachers in their hundreds and thousands engaged in march-rallies and picket-delegations to press their demands for better pay, he and KAGUMA comrades worked doubly hard to rouse their fellow teachers into action. Their efforts paid off. That same year, in Camarines Norte, mentors mounted a month-long sit-down strike and mass leave, one of the longest in the history of teachers' struggles in the Philippines.

The story of Aris and the teachers' movement in Bicol is not unique. It typifies the development of the revolutionary movement among teachers in many other parts of the country and reflects the advances of the KAGUMA as the central organization of the revolutionary teachers' movement.

This May, the KAGUMA consolidated its gains by gathering together teacher-delegates from different regions all over the country who shared with each other their experiences in leading the teachers' movement and in building the KAGUMA. On that occasion, Aris, together with more than 40 other KAGUMA activists who came all the way from Northern Luzon to Mindanao met somewhere in Luzon to convene the KAGUMA National Congress. The first ever since the organization's founding 14 years ago, the congress formally launched the KAGUMA on a national scale and unified the various activities of KAGUMA nationwide through the ratification of a constitution and the adoption of an eight-point program and an organizing guide.

Each delegate reported on the status of KAGUMA organizing in his region. Accord-



Marking a milestone: KAGUMA delegate signing congress documents

ding to the reports, KAGUMA chapters have been set up in two regions in Luzon, one region in the Visayas, and practically all regions in Mindanao. KAGUMA cells and study circles have also been formed and are in various stages of development in other parts of the country. At present, there are more than 500 KAGUMA members nationwide.

During the congress, the participants elected the 21 members of the National Council, from whom six were chosen to comprise the National Executive Committee. Elected were Lakay Abelard, Chairman; Pinafiel Vencer, Vice Chairman; Gabriel Rodriguez, General Secretary; Lara Abesamis, Finance Officer; Santi Marcelino, Education Officer; and Aya Plantasyon, Information Officer.

Political movement of teachers

KAGUMA has come a long way since its establishment in 1971 in the midst of intense worker and youth-student struggles. Its launching this year on a national scale comes at a time when the national democratic revolution has achieved even more unprecedented advances in the open mass movement, united front building and armed struggle. At this crucial stage, it marks a new and bold direction for the revolutionary teachers' movement: the creation of a broad mass movement, capable of launching actions that can deliver stinging blows against the dictatorship.

In a message read before the congress, the National Democratic Front referred to this when it defined KAGUMA's tasks at the present time. A founding and leading member of the NDF, KAGUMA represents the patriotic and progressive teachers in the revolutionary united front.

The NDF stressed in particular, that one important task of the teachers' movement at this stage of the struggle is to help advance the urban revolutionary mass movement. "Even as teachers continue to wage struggles for their economic welfare and democratic rights, they must at once be able to link such struggles to the overall struggle to topple the much-hated dictatorship," said the NDF. "They must continue to participate in and advance general political struggles in coordination with other progressive sectors, especially with the basic masses."

The role of the teachers' sector in the intensification of anti-dictatorship struggles in the cities is seen in its potential capacity to launch massive political strikes. When waged in coordination with the political struggles of students, workers and the broad masses of the people, teachers' political strikes have the ability to paralyze the state machinery and shake the very foundations of dictatorial rule.

The size of the teachers' sector alone underscores its potential to inflict telling blows against the dictatorship, once its members act in concert. As of school year 1981-82, there were 402,763 teachers in



Overworked and underpaid: 78% of teachers receive incomes below the poverty line

both public and private schools. As a group, teachers comprise the majority (60.2%) of the total number of professionals in the country. In addition, more than three-fourths of the country's teachers (78.4%) are in the public elementary and secondary schools, and constitute the largest sector of government workers.

Thus, if fully organized, teachers can exert great influence and win over to the side of the revolution, both the rank-and-file government bureaucracy and the urban petty bourgeoisie. Together with the youth and students, the teachers comprise a major mass movement in the urban areas that can draw the broadest masses to participate in urban mass struggles.

Teachers also comprise the overwhelming majority (90%) of workers within the education sector. In view of this, the KAGUMA program lists as one of the teachers' strategic tasks, the formation of a broad alliance of all progressive and patriotic elements within the education sector.

The establishment of such a broad front within the education sector will be of considerable help in advancing the teachers' movement, as organized school administrators and employees make possible better conditions for undertaking revolutionary work and extend invaluable technical assistance.

The development of a strong united front within the education sector moreover heightens the sector's political character and capability to directly challenge the dictatorship through actions launched in coordination with those of the basic masses. The existence of such a broad front also ensures that the seeds for a revolutionary transformation of the educa-

tional system are sown even now.

The KAGUMA also gives special attention to organizing Filipino teachers abroad, whose ranks continue to swell because of the poor economic rewards of teaching in the Philippines. In March 1982, for example, a news item in the *Bulletin Today* stated that the country loses competent and qualified college and technology teachers at an average of 60 per month to higher paying jobs in the Middle East, the US and elsewhere. The number could well be higher if elementary and secondary school teachers who leave for overseas jobs are included. Once organized, however, Filipino teachers overseas can contribute much to boost the Philippine revolution's reserve of international support.

Advancing the cultural revolution

Even as teachers now begin to assert their political role in advancing the urban revolutionary mass movement, they continue to exercise their pivotal role in the national democratic cultural revolution. As purveyors of knowledge, old and new, they are vital in shaping the consciousness of a people and influencing the course of public opinion. The KAGUMA General Program identifies the teachers' sector as the most influential and decisive among the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. Thus, they are in the best position to expose to the people the evils of the US-Marco dictatorship and explain the need for a people's war to overthrow it.

In view of this, the KAGUMA's task as vanguard of the revolutionary teachers' movement is to advance the national democratic cultural revolution and propaganda movement in the schools and in



Strike! : MLQU employes demanding just share in school owners' profits

the communities.

In concrete terms, this means working together with the revolutionary youth and students to shatter the colonial, feudal and fascist ideas being peddled by the regime, and in their place, inculcate the ideals of patriotism, scientific thinking and unswerving dedication to the people's cause.

The KAGUMA program defines patriotic, scientific and pro-people education as one that "utilizes scientific methods and principles (in analyzing people's problems) and is at the service of the people, especially the basic masses of workers and peasants." It is one "that exposes and opposes imperialist intervention in education and other fields, condemns the regime's puppetry to its US masters, and popularizes the democratic aspirations and revolutionary struggles of the basic masses and other exploited sectors: for the peasants, the demand for genuine land reform; for the workers, the clamor for a just wage and the right to unionize; for businessmen, the achievement of a genuine and nationalist industrialization; for the minorities, the attainment of freedom from national oppression; for women, the enjoyment of equal rights."

Also as part of its tasks in advancing the propaganda movement and cultural revolution, the KAGUMA will spearhead a literacy campaign among sections of Filipinos not reached by formal education, many of whom are found in areas within or adjacent to guerrilla zones. In fact, in one Southern Luzon province where such literacy classes have been started, some of the teachers' first pupils are NPA guerrillas.

By helping the masses to read and write, KAGUMA members enhance their capabil-

ity to analyze issues and convey their ideas. In doing so, they hasten the process of arousing the people and winning them over to the revolution.

Analysis of the educational system

Many of KAGUMA's gains can be attributed to its incisive analysis of the ills of the Philippine educational system and the travails of the Filipino teacher. "The educational system," said KAGUMA Chairman Lakay Abelard in an interview with LIB, "exists to serve the interests of the imperial masters rather than the Filipino people. Such imperialist dictation is reflected in several MECS (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports) orders that are anti-Filipino, anti-teacher and anti-student."

Some of these are MECS Order No. 25, which replaces PD 451. PD 451 allocates 60% of tuition fee increases to salary increases for teachers. The MECS order, however, rescinds this and is therefore "in favor of the school owner-capitalist," Abelard noted. A second MECS order is the National Service Law (NSL). Currently a hot issue among students and educators alike, the NSL is an "attempt to militarize the institutions (of learning) and thereby ensure the preservation of the status quo," said Abelard. Another is MECS Order No. 65, described as "a subtle attempt to abolish social science subjects in favor of courses that will graduate technicians for employment in multinationals." The net effect, said Abelard, "is to stifle the sources of critical thinking on the part of teachers and students."

"In addition," said KAGUMA Vice Chairman Pinafel Vencer in the same in-

terview, "the educational system is used to disseminate fascist ideology. Schoolchildren are taught the "values" of GOLD (Gratitude, Obedience, Loyalty and Discipline), which makes them passive. There is no attempt to inculcate critical thinking."

Added KAGUMA Information Officer Aya Plantasyon, "Even the content of textbooks, especially those produced under the World Bank-funded PRODED (Program to Decentralize Education) tends to justify neo-colonial relations between the Philippines and other countries. One social studies textbook, for example, states that 'Filipinos are an industrious people and are good at planting bananas. The Japanese are also industrious and are good at making appliances.' Thus, there is a 'happy exchange' of bananas (agricultural products) and appliances (finished products) between the Philippines and Japan."

Abelard summed it up this way: "What we have, therefore, is an educational system that perpetuates the neocolonial as well as the semi-feudal structure of this decadent society."

Travails of teachers

Very much a part of this picture is the teachers' sorry plight. "Teachers are the most overworked and underpaid creatures in the country," said Abelard. Indeed, no statement could be truer. Using the most conservative measure of the poverty threshold level in 1984 (*Businessday's* estimate of P1,939 per month), the highest mean effective monthly salary, which is received by teachers in the National Capital Region, falls below the poverty line by P500. However, a recent study conducted by the Association of Catholic Universities of the Philippines, in which 978 teacher-respondents from three regions participated, revealed that if a more realistic measure of the poverty threshold is used (the Center for Research and Communication's estimate of P3,515 per month), the proportion of teachers receiving incomes below the threshold level will swell to more than 78%.

So crucial, and basic in fact, are economic welfare issues that the history of the teachers' movement in the Philippines has time and again been marked by massive protest actions waged to demand higher salaries and the implementation of existing legal orders stipulating increases in allowances and other benefits.

In 1969, the first walk-out or "mass leave" of public school teachers was staged to demand salaries commensurate to the cost of living. In school year 1971-72, Quezon City teachers boycotted their classes due to the non-implementation of the cost-of-living allowance. In 1981, the University of the East faculty walked out of their classes to protest the non-implementation of PD 451. Teachers from the Gregorio Araneta University Foundation in Caloocan; the Mabini College in Iriga City;

the Cebu Institute of Technology in Cebu City; and the International Harvarden Colleges in Davao City also waged strikes over the same issue.

Closely related to the problem of low salaries is the issue of democratic rights. The state and school managements continue to suppress the teachers' basic right to establish organizations that will truly work for their interests. In fact, the first teachers' strike in the Philippines was launched in 1963 by members of the Feati faculty association over the refusal of the school administration to recognize their union. It was only three years later that the faculty union was recognized. Up to now, however, only about 10% of private school teachers are organized, and many schools do not even have faculty clubs. Public school teachers, though historically the most organized subsector, remain disadvantaged because of government prohibitions on their right to strike and to form unions.

The KAGUMA's role in the current economic-democratic struggles being waged by teachers "ranges from support and encouragement to actual leadership," said Plantasyon. "In areas where our KAGUMA chapters are still in the formative stage or where none have yet been set up, we support or encourage teachers' spontaneous struggles. And in areas where we already have strong KAGUMA chapters, we are able to take the lead and actually initiate these struggles."

No doubt, it is the KAGUMA's effective leadership or influence over the economic-democratic struggles of teachers that has led to its broadening reach and organizational expansion in recent years. "If we do not address these legitimate demands, we cannot win over the masses of teachers and advance the teachers' movement," said Abelard.

Economic-democratic struggles also prove to be effective springboards for politicalization, for KAGUMA cadres take this opportunity to explain to the teachers that their sad financial plight has a deeper

basis — that it is rooted in the basic problems of Philippine society. "Through such struggles, we are also able to know who the more advanced elements are and recruit them into the KAGUMA," said Abelard.

Greater challenges ahead

Further highlighting the revolutionary teachers' movement's broadening orientation is its growing contributions to the revolutionary armed struggle. As a national democratic revolutionary organization, it is also the KAGUMA's task to promote armed struggle and to give support to the New People's Army and other armed groups that may join the NDF in the future.

Not only has the KAGUMA provided technical and material support to the armed struggle ever since its inception, it has also deployed teacher-activists to the countryside to undertake peasant organizing and other revolutionary tasks. The NPA likewise has among its ranks many former teacher-activists who have opted to give the highest form of service to the revolution. In fact, in LIB interviews with Aris and some other teacher-delegates to the KAGUMA congress, many confided that they plan, in the future, to join the NPA.

Truly, the KAGUMA's first national congress marks a milestone in the development of both the teachers' movement in the Philippines and in the overall revolutionary struggle. The NDF's message rightly sums up the congress' achievements: "With the establishment of the (KAGUMA) on a national scale, the revolutionary teachers' movement is doing its share in building up the National Democratic Front, advancing the struggle to overthrow the US-Marcos dictatorship and establishing the democratic coalition government."

It is to these ends that Aris and more than 40 other teacher-delegates more fervently committed themselves as they returned to their regions after the congress to resume their tasks. **Victoria Manalo**



Raising high the barricades: Bataan residents block

MAINSTREAM

Developments in the anti-dictatorship

Barricades in

Three-day people's strike scores a direct

From June 18 to 20, drivers in Bataan did not ply their routes, workers walked out of the factories, students boycotted their classes, while business establishments from banks to fishball stalls were closed. For three consecutive days, Bataan stood still as residents— young and old, male and female, rich and poor— participated in a province-wide *welgang bayan* or people's strike.

A people's strike is a qualitatively higher form of mass protest paralyzing normal activities in a certain area. The paralyzation of industries, transport, education, commerce and the bureaucracy comprises a direct blow on the dictatorship, and shakes the foundations of the state. A people's strike is also of great value in tempering the people and developing a revolutionary situation in the urban areas. It provides a glimpse of some of the components of popular uprisings and insurrections that will be waged in the cities as the revolution intensifies. To be successful, it entails the active cooperation of all sectors, especially the transport and industrial workers.

Dubbed as *Lakas ng Bayan Laban sa Lakas ng Nukleyar*, the success of the Bataan strike effectively and dramatically expressed the people's strong and determined opposition against the impending operation of the Philippines' first nuclear power plant, built in Morong, Bataan.



Candles illumine KAGUMA pledge during oath-taking ceremony



roads in Orani (left); armored personnel carrier tries to break through human wall in Pilar (right)

struggle

Bataan

hit at the regime

The P2.1 billion nuclear monster has been reported by nuclear experts to contain over 4,000 defects. It stands near an earthquake fault and an active volcano, while the government is still pondering on where to dump the radioactive wastes.

The welgang bayan was led by the Nuclear-Free Bataan Movement (NFBM), Malayang Katipunan ng mga taga-Bataan and the Lupon ng Nagkakaisang Tinig ng Anti-Nukleyar (LUNTIAN). At least 22 national and provincial mass organizations joined the mass action. Activities were successfully paralyzed in all towns except in Morong and Bagac which were physically separated from other towns and which have always been heavily deployed with Philippine Marine and Army units.

Human barricades were set up on the second day of the strike in two major points: in Pilar town in the southern part of the province and in Orani town in the north. The first was manned by some 8,000 marchers from Mariveles, most of whom were workers from the Bataan Export Processing Zone, where 29 out of 34 factories declared a work stoppage in support of the people's strike. In the northern barricade, Metro Manila-based groups joined over 10,000 residents from Orani and other nearby towns. Over 50 jeepneys and one busload of supporters also arrived from Pampanga.



Holding their ground: Marchers prevent soldiers from breaking Pilar barricade

Meanwhile, residents who did not join the marches and barricades helped by contributing food to the participants. The food, wrapped in plastic bags, were distributed to the hungry strikers.

Indeed, they were touching and inspiring days of strength and unity. The welgang bayan was a vivid demonstration of the effectivity of the people's united and militant action against the US-Marcos regime. As expected, the military tried to stop it. V-150 tanks (straight from Cordillera) roamed from town to town accompanied by a jeepload of armed soldiers. One of them spoke through a megaphone, telling the people that June 18 to 20 would be normal days in Bataan and that the military will "protect" them



Rallying people's power against the BNPP

against strikers. Marine units both cajoled and threatened vendors to open stores while potbellied men with guns tucked in their waists proliferated even before the actual welgang bayan. Moreover, barangay captains reported being forced to sign a statement saying that they were for "peace and order" and were against "marches, demonstrations, closure of shops, jeepney strikes, etc."

Fr. Tony Dumaul, NFBM chairman, also cited cases of harassment during the torch parade which signalled the start of the welgang bayan. Shots were reportedly fired by the military although nobody was hurt. A few days before this, three members of the Bataan Alliance of Students in Action (BALSA) were apprehended while putting up posters.

When human barricades were set up early morning of the second day, Col. Jose Andaya, Bataan provincial commander, first snubbed negotiators in Pilar and warned that he would forcibly disperse the march in ten minutes. A chemite tank was rammed against the human barricade and succeeded in breaking through. Undaunted, the strikers clung to the sides of the tank. Others again formed a human wall, preventing an army jeep from following the tank. Later, the military had to retreat, with the tank moving out of the barricade toward the municipal hall grounds.

Army, Air Force and Marine units, however, took turns blocking the road to Balanga, the provincial capital. The Orani and Pilar groups were scheduled to meet in Balanga on the third day of the strike and hold a culminating rally in the town plaza. Colonel Andaya tersely announced their decision: "*Titiisin namin na nandiyan kayo pero titiisin n'yo hamana bindi umalis diyan.*" To this, a striker retorted, "How childish. *Pag di mo ako*

binigyan ng kendi, bindi rin kita bibigyan." Tension then continued in the Pilar barricade until the final day. A near-clash occurred shortly before noon when stones and a softdrink bottle were thrown at the military by some strikers. Armalite-wielding men were then ordered to position themselves around the marchers while reinforcements arrived.

The strikers were finally allowed to march to Balanga only after negotiations. The provincial commander insisted that ocular inspection of strikers be made. Although the latter agreed, it was a hollow victory and barely saved his face. The marchers would have stayed there all night had the military refused to let them pass. The northern group, meanwhile, was blocked on its way to Balanga and was also ordered searched by Colonel Andaya. This time, all strikers wearing fatigue jackets were severely warned not to wear them again lest they be suspected as NPA guerrillas. The Bataan soldiers, however, wore handkerchiefs or ski masks over their faces for fear of being recognized by the NPA.

It was past 7 p.m. when the strikers finally marched toward the Balanga town plaza. Exhausted (some sick due to the incessant rain and howling winds), but jubilant and triumphant, they pledged to continue opposing the nuclear plant's operation and to topple the mastermind behind it, the US-Marcos regime. As one speaker during the final rally said, "The Bataan welgang bayan is a concrete example of what people's unity and strength can do." It effectively isolated the US-Marcos regime and helped consolidate the open mass movement, not just in Bataan but in the whole of Central Luzon.

Indeed, it was a triumph of the people's will against the Bataan nuclear plant and the US-Marcos dictatorship. **Liz Beltran**

Bloody but

Filipino workers escalate struggle despite



Staying put: Shoemart workers enduring water

The abduction of union leader Hilario Tugade in Bulacan on April 28 and the disappearance of labor organizer Wilfredo Alatan in Cagayan de Oro City on April 21 brought grim foreboding of more repression as the nationwide Labor Day celebration neared. In Manila, Western Police District chief Gen. Narciso Cabrera threatened to forcibly stop the scheduled workers' marches; earlier, the dictator Marcos warned about "subversives" in the labor front.

And yet, workers turned out in their thousands all over the country on May 1, braving the regime's threats, and despite the growing attacks against union leaders and activists. Defying the police and the dictator's warnings, they marched.

The next day, the headlines blazed "20,000 participants in May Day rally;" "500,000 participants all over the country." In Manila, three big march-rallies marked Labor Day. In Mindanao, 140,000 workers and members of other sectors formed the core of a people's strike that paralyzed 19 major towns and cities in that island. In Panay, 30,000 workers and sympathizers who marched from different areas in the island, joined a massive May Day protest action held in Iloilo City.

Coordinated strikes

The workers' open defiance of the regime on Labor Day reflects the high-



Repression: Soldiers and tank confront strikers; Balanga marchers frisked

unbowed

rising repression



cannon blasts



Strong and defiant: Workers march at Liwasang Bonifacio despite regime's threats

tening militancy that has characterized the labor front in recent years. In their thousands, workers have begun conducting bigger and more coordinated mass actions, showing the higher level of unity and organizational capability of the progressive labor movement.

Valenzuela, dubbed as the current strike capital of the Philippines, has been the base for 41 of the 136 strikes and work stoppages launched in different parts of the country from January to April. On April 24, a coordinated strike by the Alyansa ng Manggagawa sa Valenzuela area alliance, with its 8,000-worker base, was the first ever in Metro Manila. The most recent strikes of the Bataan Export Processing Zone (BEPZ) in May and December of 1984 were waged to protest inhuman working conditions and the forcible breaking up of pickets. The BEPZ workers pioneered in coordinated strikes in June 1982, then followed these up in October 1983 and May 1984. In Mindanao, people's strikes featured one-day coordinated strikes in February and May 1985 as well as in November 1984.

All these point to the obviously accelerating capacity of the progressive labor movement to wage industrial strikes on a regional and national level. These new and higher forms of workers' struggles are intended to cripple the normal activities of society and rock the economic and political foundations of the US-

backed fascist state.

So shaken by such recent labor offensives was the regime that no less than labor minister Blas Ople, who had earlier emphatically denied the existence of a "strike fever," immediately changed his tune. Noted Ople with alarm: "Workers are resorting to a new concerted form of action which does not fall in line with the legal definition of a strike, in the sense that it does not involve merely a dispute between workers and their employers or respective companies. Workers' mass actions are no longer confined to company-level disputes, but are broadly based and critical of government socio-economic policies."

There has also been an unprecedented leap this year in the number of factory strikes. In the first four months of 1985 alone, a total of 94 strikes were launched, a figure which does not include the 42 strikes carried over from 1984. In the same period, five million manhours were lost, indicating a 50% increase over the figure for the first quarter of 1984. At this rate, the current strike wave is expected to surpass last year's record in terms of the number of work stoppages, workers involved and manhours lost. For 1984, the figure was 282 recorded strikes involving

63,478 workers that resulted in over 15 million manhours lost.

Strikes have also spread to other sectors, including banks (where they are banned, banking being considered a vital industry), public school teachers, Philippine National Railway employees, longshoremen in the North and South harbors of Manila, hospital workers in Quezon City, transport workers and employees in big department stores like Shoemart and the American Sports Plaza.

Government moves

During the past May Day celebrations, the regime's customary response to labor demands were promises of benefits long due the workers, along with dole-outs and measly wage-increases—palliatives that are a usual part of the May Day ritual. Now there is not even that. For on May 1, Marcos instead went on an extended monologue in Malacanang, about "give and take" and the "unity and harmony" that should prevail between management and labor. At the same time, he warned militant labor groups against disturbing "industrial peace." He signed letters of instruction (LOI) to strengthen the labor ministry's administrative and operational capability

to deal with strikes.

Heading the regime's latest and most stringent anti-labor legislation is LOI 1458. This new presidential order licenses the police and military to break picket lines at the pretext of enforcing the labor ministry's "certification for compulsory arbitration" and "assumption of jurisdiction." It also sanctions the termination and replacement of striking workers who defy back-to-work orders. Infinitely harsher than its predecessors Batas Pambansa 130 and 227 which likewise curtail the right to strike, LOI 1458's primary objective is to thwart the accelerating momentum of the workers' strike movement in the country.

ding a jeep fired at the picket line of Franklin Baker Co. in Davao del Sur, while shots also rang out from inside the company compound. The attacks left Nestor Macalino and Willy Agustin dead, and 10 other workers, including members of their families, wounded. Barely two months after, a company truck rammed a human barricade put up by workers at the gate of Era Industries at San Jose del Monte, Bulacan on Feb. 25, killing Arnel Dy and Rodrigo Garcia. Days later, two more workers were killed in picket line violence at the Blue Bar factory in Quezon and at Filipinas Plastics in Malabon. On May 6, Jenoschick Paul, a worker at Silicon Inc. in Pasay City, became the

this year's strikes are the same as those of 1984: non-implementation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) benefits won by workers, violations of labor standards and laws such as those pertaining to mandatory wages and allowances, and illegal suspension, dismissal or termination of workers, usually active unionists or union officials. This is symptomatic of the fact that workers' conditions have not changed, and have even grown worse.

The strike fever comes at a time of increased unemployment brought about by the closure of hundreds of small independent businesses and establishments. The cutback on importation of raw materials and the devaluation of the peso, which were conditions imposed by the IMF-World Bank in exchange for \$650 million in standby credit, led to a scarcity of imported materials crucial to the manufacturing sector. The results are forced shutdowns, mass layoffs and a cutback in production. Ople himself has admitted that 83,000 workers were laid off in 1984, a 10% increase over the number of job terminations in 1983.

Moreover, from 1983 to 1984, an additional 45,000 workers were affected by the reduction of work hours in hard-pressed industries. At present, the rotation system also affects 30,142 workers in 316 factories. Over in Negros Occidental, 70% of the estimated 300,000 sugar workers are expected to be laid off because of the sugar industry crisis.

Big foreign and local capitalists, in collusion with the regime, use the grave economic crisis—the worse in the country's history—to further intensify the exploitation of Filipino labor. With the crisis as a ready alibi, they have cut production costs in a bid to raise more profits and come down hard on the unions.

Depressed wages

Rising unemployment has also emboldened big capitalists to further push down wages or violate the legislated Effective Minimum Wage (EMW), since there is increased competition among workers for jobs in the labor market. This enables them to maintain or even raise profit levels.

The crisis has spurred the widespread practice among multinational corporations to hire apprentices and learners (casual and probationary workers) who can be paid 75% (or less) of the EMW, and who technically have no right to strike, as stipulated in their labor contracts. It has moreover become a practice to fire or dismiss under any pretext, these casual workers just when they are due to become regulars entitled to the EMW. It is not uncommon for such workers to be subsequently rehired as casuals receiving substandard pay. At the sweatshops of the BEPZ, an unpublished



Tightening grip: Armed goons grab picketing Shoemart worker

Parallel to the regime's desperate moves to maintain "industrial peace" are new laws to bleed the workers dry. Chief of these is Executive Order 857. This order requires the more than 400,000 Filipino overseas workers to remit 50 to 70% of their dollar earnings through government-authorized banks. Overseas workers and their supporters have denounced it as another IMF-World Bank imposition to centralize the workers' dollar earnings into foreign exchange reserves to enable the government to pay its huge foreign debt (see page 24).

Increasingly pressured from all sides, especially from US big business and the imperialist-controlled funding agencies, the regime has wasted little time in forcing restive workers to bow down to its orders. The grim pattern of escalating repression on labor ranks attests to this. According to the human rights watchdog agency, the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, seven workers have already been killed at the picket lines from January to May this year—an alarming number compared to the figure of eight strikers killed from 1975 to 1984.

Last Jan. 10, "unidentified men" ri-

seventh addition to the rising number of workers killed during violent attacks on picket lines by combined forces of company guards, goons, police and the military. Many of these dispersals were carried out "legally," meaning injunction orders had been issued by the courts, the National Labor Relations Commission or the labor ministry, empowering authorities to break up pickets.

Also from Jan. 23 to June 5 this year, 10 workers and a labor lawyer have been salvaged, seven of whom come from Mindanao. This brings to 57 the total of workers summarily executed since 1973. In addition, six militant workers and labor organizers have been reported missing between March 29 and April 28 this year, separate from the 14 other workers reported missing from 1973 to 1984. The trail of their mysterious disappearances inevitably leads to that notorious culprit—the regime's military agents.

Rising unemployment

Filipino labor's working and living conditions have fared no better.

Significantly, the issues raised during

Sham sovereignty

June 12 rally assails Marcos regime's subservience

The Marcos regime's extravagant show of force to mark Independence Day failed to daunt tens of thousands of protesters who staged a rally last June 12 to denounce the bogus independence of the Philippine Republic.

As fighter planes streaked across Manila's ashen skies and army tanks rolled out into potholed streets, a sea of defiant fists was raised by a 25,000-strong assembly of workers, professionals, urban poor, organized women, students and church people. Coming from various points in Metro Manila, the groups converged at the Liwasang Bonifacio where they held a rally. From there, they proceeded to Taft Ave. with the United States embassy as their point of destination.

In front of the Manila City Hall, however, the marchers were blocked by a



Protesting fake freedom: Rallyists curse parading military planes

phalanx of anti-riot policemen backed up by SWAT teams and armalite-toting marines. Ordered to disperse, the demonstrators held their ground. They stayed in front of the City Hall where various speakers denounced US imperia-

lism's heightening domination and control of the Philippines and the Marcos regime's puppetry to US interests.

Also attacked was the regime's increasing use of terror tactics to quell dissenters and instill fear in all other citizens.

socio-economic survey shows, for example, that 50% of the work force is made up of "apprentices."

Very often, too, suspensions and dismissals are used to strike back at active unionists, although the reasons given for dismissal are generally the absence of orders for the company's product; a lack of raw materials, and extensive losses. In these cases, the first to be dismissed are often union officers and members. In Franklin Baker, for example, 205 workers who had earlier participated in a work stoppage were dismissed, and at Baxter Travenol, 80 unionists were laid off.

family of six in Metro Manila is P108 a day, twice the EMW. Even then, the 1984 EMW of P57 had a real value of P9.66, or a little over a peso-and-a-half over the P8 minimum wage in 1972 (see table).

Further eroding the workers' take-home pay are numerous compulsory deductions such as the PAG-IBIG Housing Fund (P79.28 is taken from a basic monthly pay of P962) — a contribution that accounts for one-third of all the various wage cuts such as SSS, Medicare and withholding tax. Though touted by the regime as "Pondo ng Manggagawa," workers who can hardly make both ends

"Mabirap maging manggagawa sa panabong ito," said Kardo, an active unionist in Manila, angrily shaking his head. "Wala ka nang makain, sinisikil at pina-patay ka pa." With their backs to the wall, the options — and the future — of the Filipino laborer may indeed seem bleak. But with a note of hope and optimism in his voice, Kardo added: "Ang tanging nairwan na lang sa amin ay ang karapatang lumaban."

The option of struggle is a weapon Kardo and others like him have come to utilize to their best advantage. As members of the revolutionary labor movement which serves as the backbone of the workers' strike movement, Kardo and his fellow workers remain unshaking in their fight to continue pressing their just demand for better wages, humane working conditions and the right to strike and to self-organization, whether in company-wide or coordinated strikes or in political demonstrations. They are moreover determined to raise their political consciousness and form more and broader forms of organization that are the basic requisites for launching even more advanced struggles — leading to the general strikes.

These combined, coordinated and higher forms of struggle are definitely more effective in defending workers' rights against the combined attacks of the dictatorship and the big capitalists. With the revolutionary labor movement gaining strength each day and winning more support from other sectors, their past mass actions will indeed seem mere muscle-flexing compared to what is to come. LIB Staff



YEAR	NOMINAL WAGE	REAL WAGE	INFLATION RATE	CPI*
1972	8.00	8.00	—	100.0
1973	8.00	7.02	14.0	114.0
1983	42.07	10.63	10.8	395.9
1984	57.08	9.66	49.3	580.9

*Consumer price index

But even as the unemployed face starvation, hunger and a life of great insecurity and despondency, those who earn wages do not have enough to sustain themselves and their families, or meet their basic needs. In an underdeveloped economy, where there are millions of unemployed workers, wages are depressed in the labor market. Furthermore, it has become a basic policy of the puppet regime to depress wages, keeping labor cheap for foreign investors to do business in the Philippines.

As of 1985, the EMW is P57.08. But the estimated cost of living for a fa-

meet, much less construct their own houses, are not the major beneficiaries of this fund.

Small wonder then that workers have been bitterly waging strikes. The 11-month-old Artex strike, for example, was waged because of the non-payment of legislated wages. When the strike was called, workers received P23 a day when the EMW was already P42 a day. At Victoria Original Foods in Valenzuela, women workers were being paid a measly P14 a day in November 1984, when the P57.08 EMW became effective.

Cited in particular was the setting loose of secret marshals who have been responsible for the execution without trial of persons merely suspected of being criminals. Said the Manila-Rizal regional committee of the NDF in a statement distributed during the rally: "The spate of civilian killings by the police and military in Manila-Rizal should be conceived as a desperate act of the regime to lengthen its tottering rule" and to secure its political base in its very central bastion of power, especially in view of the forthcoming 1986 local elections.

In a separate statement, the Christians for National Liberation (CNL), the underground organization of church people which is also an NDF member, castigated the "increasing interventionist acts of the US government" which "more openly expose (its) grip on our country." Among these acts, the CNL said, are the stiff impositions dictated by the US-dominated IMF-World Bank that go with the release of the \$3.9 billion loans and trade credit facilities, the US Congress' six-point demand for democratic reforms as a condition for the granting of future aid to the Philippines and the invocation of the US-RP Mutual Defense Treaty to send US combat troops to boost the regime's counter-insurgency campaign.



Chino Roces' own protest statement

The CNL also lambasted the regime for using the "armed might of the state to enforce its dictatorial rule." It cited the shooting of critical media men, the murder of militant mass leaders including church people like Italian priest Fr. Tullio Favali and the arrest and blacklisting of human rights lawyers. Said the revolutionary church organization: "It seems as if the forces of fascism, emboldened by the support and advise of US imperialism, have started to do away with the intricacies of covering up their crimes and are now resorting to the open and brazen display of their atrocities."

In a stinging attack on the true significance of US presence in the Philippines, the CNL said: "Imperialism in our country means war, an unjust war of aggression." Because of this, the organization said it stands on its belief that the Filipino people have the right to defend themselves against this unjust aggression and take up arms against the aggressor. "The right to exist as a sovereign nation and live as a sovereign people is a God-given right which is inalienable," stressed the CNL. "The people therefore have the obligation to defend this right against any earthly power that tries to play god in their lives." □

Outwitting the enemy

NPA kills 34 soldiers in Pamplona, Cagayan Valley



Guerrillas discussing military tactics

Thirty-eight enemy troopers composed of members of the 115th PC Company and a number of CHDFs and policemen were in high spirits on the morning of March 8. They had just come back from an encirclement and suppression operation against the NPA in Sitio Macalino, Masi, Pamplona, Cagayan during which they killed one

Red fighter and confiscated an M16 and an M2 carbine. As they carried their victim's body to Pamplona, with the intention of showing him off to the town residents, they engaged in light banter and often exploded in raucous laughter. Their jubilant mood, however, was to be short-lived.

Unknown to them, 28 members of an NPA ambush team had already positioned themselves along the path the enemy forces would be taking. Patiently, the Red fighters waited for the soldiers to cross the river separating the sitio from the town proper and approach the firing line. From a distance of 100 meters, the NPAs could see that 28 of the enemy troopers were walking while the rest were aboard a truck. At around 12:30 p.m., they were almost halfway across the river.

Fifteen minutes later, the NPA unleashed a volley of shots, and the battle began. The exchange of fire lasted for one hour, with the enemy forces utterly confused by the attacks coming from different directions. For aside from the main NPA assault team, snipers positioned in different places shot at the troopers. One by one, the enemy soldiers fell into the water, with some trying to swim away in panic.

During the gunbattle, two guerrillas, Ka Leon and Ka Joan, volunteered to go forward and seize the firearms of the dead troopers. They were, however, shot dead

by soldiers who were still inside the truck. But before they were killed, the two Red fighters were able to wipe out the enemy troopers in the truck.

All but four of the 38-man enemy force were killed. The casualties included 2Lt. Cesar Belen, administrative officer of the 115th PC Coy, and 2Lt. Joseph Lim; both were fresh graduates of the Philippine Military Academy.

Eight M16s, an M203, an M60, a Garand and an M2 were seized by the Red fighters. The masses in the area victoriously came out to help the NPA collect the arms seized, treat the wounded and organize themselves to dive for more arms that sank in the river. The guerrillas took with them the bodies of their dead comrades including that of the NPA fighter slain in the enemy attack earlier in the morning.

Two days later, bitter over their defeat, the military sent over combined forces of the Philippine Army, the Philippine Constabulary, RSAC, police and CHDF, complete with two armored cars and two helicopters to the barrio. The reinforcement team fired its guns indiscriminately at the barrio, thus terrorizing civilians living there. Meanwhile, on March 11, Barangay Cagandungan in Pamplona was bombed, and the nearby sitios of Awala, Turatod and Dumayon in Luna, Kalinga-Apayao were strafed.

Such military atrocities, however, only served to fire up the people's anger against the fascist troopers, and strengthen their resolve to support the New People's Army. □